

Questions to Ask Before Choosing a Walk-In Tub

What the showroom visit will not bring up on its own

A walk-in tub is one of the most heavily marketed home safety purchases there is, and one of the few most families only make once. Most of the complaints that turn up after installation trace back to a question nobody asked before signing. This sheet is that list of questions.

How to use this. Bring this to the in-home sales visit or the showroom. Write the answer next to each question as it is given, in the person's own words — a written quote is easier to compare later than a memory of what was said.

Fit and access

The tub has to work for the body using it, not the average body.

- ☐ What is the exact threshold height to step over, measured rather than described as "low-entry"?
- ☐ Does that height match this person's actual ability to lift a leg safely, today, not five years ago?
- ☐ Is there a built-in seat, and is its height right for sitting down and standing back up without help?
- ☐ Is the door hinge or slide on the side the person can reach and operate with the grip strength they have now?

Fill and drain time

This is the detail a showroom visit tends not to demonstrate.

- ☐ What is the actual, timed fill time — not the number in the brochure?
- ☐ What is the actual, timed drain time before it is safe to open the door and stand?
- ☐ What happens to comfort during the drain, when the water has already gone cold and the person is still sitting in an empty tub?
- ☐ Is there a heated seat or in-tub heater to keep water warm through a longer soak, and what does it add to the installation?

The door seal

Nearly every complaint that shows up in reviews traces back to this one point.

- ☐ How is the door seal rated, and how long has this specific seal design been on the market?
- ☐ Does the warranty cover a leak specifically, or only the tub shell?
- ☐ Does the warranty cover the labor to fix a leak, or only replacement parts?
- ☐ Can the installer provide references from installations at least two years old — long enough for a seal to have proven itself?

Installation and cost

The tub itself is often the smaller line item.

- ☐ Does installation require removing or replacing tile, flooring, or a doorway?
- ☐ Is that work included in the quoted price, or estimated separately?

- ☐ Is the installer licensed and insured for the plumbing and electrical work involved, and can that be confirmed directly?
- ☐ Does the quote survive being taken away and compared, or is there a "today-only" discount attached to it?

Paying for it

Coverage is narrower than most people expect going in.

- ☐ Has coverage under a state Medicaid HCBS waiver been checked, and if so, is a documented medical need and application already under way?
- ☐ For a veteran, has eligibility for a VA home modification grant or Aid and Attendance benefit been checked with a Veterans Service Officer?
- ☐ Has a home safety assessment by an occupational or physical therapist been done first, to confirm a full tub is the right scale of fix?

A cheaper question worth asking first

A walk-in tub is not the only way to bathe safely. A walk-in shower with a bench and a handheld sprayer solves the same step-over hazard, usually for less money and with no fill-and-drain wait at all. It is worth deciding whether the goal is soaking or getting clean safely before a showroom visit, not during one.

A home safety assessment from an occupational or physical therapist, done before any purchase, is the step most families skip and most often wish they had not. It can confirm whether a full tub replacement is actually the right scale of fix, or whether grab bars, a transfer bench, and better lighting solve the immediate risk for a fraction of the cost.

Important note. *This checklist is general information, not medical, legal, financial, construction, or product advice. Have the home assessed by an appropriately qualified professional, confirm licensing and insurance independently, and verify benefits or coverage with the relevant official program.*

Notes and what to buy
